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SUBJECT: EXHUMATION OF SUCRE EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING VICTIMS
HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUING PROBLEM

REF: A. 07 BOGOTA 7623
[1](#)B. 08 BOGOTA 1443
[1](#)C. 08 BOGOTA 03625
[1](#)D. 08 BOGOTA 03686

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) On October 5th, we accompanied UN High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR) Representative Javier Hernandez, Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) Human Rights Unit director Sandra Castro, and MAPP/OAS regional officials to the exhumation and re-burial of 8 of the 11 youths from Sucre who were apparently murdered by military personnel in July [1](#)2007. Representatives of the Lawyers Collective and the local chapter of the National Victims' Movement also participated. The Fiscalia expects to soon charge the recruiters who lured the youths into false job offers with murder, and is also investigating members of the 11th Brigade--several of whom are already in jail on narcotics charges. UNHCHR officials told us they have information on 46 extrajudicial killings in Sucre and Cordoba from March 2007 to July 2008. Local victim's representative Ingrid Vergara, currently part of the GOC's protection program, said the situation has improved in San Onofre. She also voiced satisfaction with her protection scheme. END SUMMARY.

EXHUMATION AND RETURN TO TOLUVEIJO

[1](#)2. (C) On October 5th, international observers, including UNHCHR, the OAS Mission in Support of the Peace Process (MAPP/OAS) regional representatives, and the U.S. Embassy, accompanied the families of 8 of the 11 youths from Toluviejo, Sucre who were murdered in July 2007. The youths had been recruited by two former paramilitary members to work on a farm outside of the town for 700,000 pesos (350 dollars) a month. The young men, ages 16-22, were then reported days later as combatants killed in combat by members of the 11th Brigade Gaulas (anti-kidnapping unit) and buried as "John Does" in nearby cemeteries in Chinu and Since (Ref A).

[1](#)3. (SBU) The bodies were exhumed and identified by family members for proper burial. Fiscalia Human Rights unit Director Sandra Castro and Medellin Human Rights Office chief prosecutor William Arteago, who is prosecuting the cases, attended the re-burial ceremony in Tuloviejo, but neither the CTI (Technical Investigative Corps) nor the Fiscalia participated in the exhumation, which was performed by an international human rights group with Fiscalia authorization. Military personnel attended the re-burial ceremony, at the invitation of Sucre Governor Jorge Barraza Farak. Barraza walked with the coffins through town, but left before the

ceremony.

¶4. (C) Castro told us the Fiscalía will soon charge the recruiters (Robinson Eustaquio Barbosa and Jose Dionisio Ramos Castillo) for the murders, and will also likely link the deaths to members of the 11th Brigade. The Colombian National Police (CNP) arrested Lt. Colonel Alvaro Zambrano (Commander of the 11th Brigade Junin Battalion) and Major Julio Parga (Commander of the 11th Brigade Gaula anti-kidnapping unit) on April 16 for narcotics charges. Both remain in jail. Ramos Castillo is cooperating with investigators and is under Fiscalía protection.

¶5. (U) After the ceremony, the international observers met with the local Human Rights Ombudsman, Oscar Herrera, the Personeria of Toluviejo, Nasly Villadiego, and members of the Lawyers Collective (Colectivo de Abogados) and the local representative of the National Victim's Movement chapter. The meeting focused on the lack of psycho-social services provided by the GOC to the families of the victims, and the slow progress of the investigations. The groups stressed that there were other unmarked graves in the region that represented more extrajudicial killings, and urged the international community to not just focus on Toluviejo and Soacha.

UNHCHR NUMBERS AND THEORIES

¶6. (C) UNHCHR Regional representative Miguel Angel Sanchez said the UN is investigating 22 cases, representing 46 victims, of alleged extrajudicial killings in Cordoba and Sucre from March 2007-July 2008. Six demobilized paramilitary members are among the 46 victims. 29 of them were claimed by the military as combatants killed in combat the same day they were reported missing. In 18 of the cases, the victims were reportedly told they were being recruited to join Aguilas Negras, but instead were killed and claimed as enemies killed in combat. Of the 46 victims, 17 were denounced by family members to the GOC. Sanchez also told us the Fiscalía--which sent a special commission to investigate alleged extrajudicial killings in the two departments last December--considers over 150 deaths in Cordoba and Sucre in 2007 to be likely extrajudicial killings. Many of these involved collusion between the 11th Brigade and criminal groups. The Gaula attached to the 11th Brigade was responsible for more than 50% of the murders.

¶7. (C) Sanchez and Hernandez noted the similarities between the Toluviejo murders and the recent cases of young men who disappeared in Soacha and later turned up as reported combat deaths in Norte de Santander (Ref C). Similar cases have also been reported in Tolima and Valle de Cauca departments. Hernandez told us he hopes to use the Soacha and Toluviejo cases to publicize the extrajudicial killing issue. He acknowledged that while the numbers of reported killings seem to have fallen over the last year--likely due to recent MOD directives and actions to prevent them-- the GOC needs to do more to combat this problem.

VICTIMS VIEWS ON SAN ONOFRE

¶8. (SBU) During the visit, we also met with Ingrid Vergara, a member of the San Onofre Victims Movement, and discussed her security situation. Vergara had been previously threatened by members of criminal groups in San Onofre, and currently receives protection from the Ministry of Interior and Justice and the CNP as part of the GOC's Protection Program. Vergara said the situation in San Onofre is not as tense as it has been in the past, though fear of a return of paramilitary violence remains. She voiced satisfaction with the protection the GOC is giving her, and said she feels comfortable participating in human rights activities, such as the exhumation and reburial ceremony in Toluviejo.

BROWNFIELD